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Amer Rep.

MEMORANDUM

August 13, 1953

To: ARA - Ambassador Dreier

Subject: Diplomatic Policy toward Latin America

As I have mentioned to you on occasion, I think it would be profitable for the Department to engage in some introspection with respect to certain habits that we have developed in our diplomatic approach to the Latin American governments and that are peculiar to our Latin American relationships.

When I look at the scene of our inter-American relations I do not see major weaknesses in our present political, economic, or military policies. Our diplomacy, however, on which the success of the policies depends in such large measure, seems to me to show unnecessary major weaknesses.

I refer to the psychological compulsion we feel, in all our dealings with individual Latin American governments, to persuade them not only of the magnitude of our interest in them, but also of the strength of our desire for their friendship. This has its roots, I think, in an uneasy conscience arising out of our changed international relationships since the war. Until World War II, the Latin Americans were considered and proclaimed our first friends. The policy of (Hemisphere) isolationism threw us all together in the one inter-American

inter-American boat, which was threatened by the traditionally evil forces of the Old World. There was strong tradition behind this political separation and opposition of Old World and New. Our forefathers crossed the ocean to escape the political tyrannies and sordid politics of the Old World. They fought for their independence and, having achieved it, defended it by such devices as the Monroe Doctrine, with its emphasis on the ideological distinction between Old World and New ("...we are of necessity more immediately connected with the movements in this Hemisphere, which has a political system essentially different from that of the allied powers in Europe").

With the abandonment of our isolationism and the development of NATO, however, we appear to have deserted the cause of the New World, to have recrossed the Atlantic, to have associated ourselves once more with the sordid political messes of the Old World from which our forefathers had escaped. The Latin Americans do not reason it out this way, and neither do we, but the sense of our desertion operates in the subconscious and lends a sort of passion to Latin American charges of neglect and complaints at the magnitude of our aid to Europe by contrast with what we furnish our own Hemisphere. All this

All this has the effect of making us uneasy in our consciences as well (although with no good reason, I think), and this is reflected in our public statements and, especially, in policy papers that we write on Latin America emphasizing the necessity of persuading the Latinos of our interest, etc. What concerns me, however, is the diplomatic habits that this has produced in us.

Because of these habits the Latin Americans are constantly in a stronger diplomatic position, in dealing with us, than the hard facts of the situation warrant. Our courtship of them enables them to play coy with us under circumstances in which one might expect them to be soliciting our favor.

Examples are legion, and anyone who has been following our Latin American relations will immediately think of them. I have been particularly interested of late weeks in culling examples from despatches from Buenos Aires. In almost a decade since he came to power, Peron has shown himself a master of the domestic political tactic that he himself has referred to as the alternation of "sugar and the whip". In his relations with us, similarly, he has alternated smiles and frowns with precisely the result, on many occasions, that he must have had in mind. For the past year or two he has engaged in considerable harassment of U.S. press services and other

and other U.S. interests in Argentina. He has also been engaging in a campaign against the U.S. through his controlled press. However, with all this going on, when Peron told our (then) outgoing Ambassador of his fear that the appointment of a new ambassador meant discontinuance or abatement of our policy of cultivating Argentine friendship, our Ambassador reacted compulsively by giving the most eager and outspoken assurances that it meant no such thing and that the U.S. was certainly going to continue its active cultivation of Argentine friendship. Under the circumstances, it might have been better to leave Peron in some uncertainty, to let him continue to worry a bit. As it was, he was given confidence that his bad behavior would not reduce the ardour of our courtship.

Attached is a typical despatch (No. 103 from B.A.) in which our Embassy shows a sort of excitement at the smile that Peron has turned upon us since Dr. Milton Eisenhower's visit, and also an anxiety lest anything we now do or say cause that smile to fade from his lips. The despatch finds that "the test may be: whether, in the face of continuing United States press criticism, we can keep Peron convinced of our bona fide desire to improve relations with Argentina.... We must maintain his confidence in our wish for better relations..."

Surely

Surely we would be more successful in our policy if Peron felt that it was he who had to convince us of his bonafides and his desire to improve relations. And I am not clear that a calculated diplomacy could not achieve this.

I do not mean to make too much of one example or to burden this memorandum with others. The point is that the psychology involved here is pervasive and predominating.

As you know, I have always favored a magnanimous policy toward Latin America and have opposed those who want us to "get tough". But we ought to reconsider our diplomatic posture in dealing with the governments and I suggest that this be one of the subjects for analysis in the study that we now have under way.

LJH

Louis J. Halle, Jr.

Copy to:

S/P - Mr. Bowie

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